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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRATISLAVA 000196

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [PARM](#) [IS](#) [LO](#)
SUBJECT: SLOVAK PM'S VISIT TO ISRAEL DECLARED A SUCCESS BY
ALL

REF: BRATISLAVA 112

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Lawrence R. Silverman for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

[11](#). (SBU) SUMMARY. Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico traveled with Minister of Defense Frantisek Kasicky and a business delegation to Israel March 18-21. Fico met with Israeli leaders, including PM Olmert and the foreign and defense ministers. He did not meet with Palestinian officials. The primary goal on the Slovak side was the expansion of trade and business relations, with a focus on the high-tech and defense industries. Fico scored political points in Israel and at home with his support of Israeli concerns and his attention to the Slovak Jewish community. Slovak and Israeli officials in Bratislava considered the trip highly successful. END SUMMARY.

PROMISE OF FUTURE VISITS

[12](#). (C) Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico traveled with a defense and business delegation to Israel March 18-21. He held meetings with Israeli Prime Minister Olmert, Deputy PM Peres, Defense Minister Peretz, FM Livni, Knesset Member Breznitz, and several Israeli businesses in the defense and telecoms sectors. That the trip was considered a success by all parties was evident in the statements and follow-up. MK Breznitz traveled to Slovakia the next week (and met with Fico again, as head of the Israeli-Slovak Friendship MP group), Peres promised to do so soon, and Olmert said he might make the journey by the end of the year. Numerous Slovak MFA officials have attested to the successful results of the trip, as has the Israeli Ambassador to Slovakia, who promised to provide business-related details when he returns to Slovakia.

FICO SAYS: EMPLOY OUR ENGINEERS

[13](#). (SBU) The GOS emphasized its goal to increase higher value added trade. Media reports cited eight Israeli businesses establishing manufacturing operations in Slovakia in the past years. At an address to 23 Israeli companies, Fico highlighted the Israeli firm Ness Technology, which has two subsidiaries in Slovakia with over 100 employees specializing in IT in the areas of energy and telecommunications. The Israeli company Rad Data Communications, a telecom equipment producer, intends to establish a high tech park in Slovakia and will send a delegation soon to choose the location. Several Israeli companies are expected at Bratislava's auto and logistics expo in April. PM Olmert reportedly voiced support for a joint investment fund to help small firms expand across the 1400 miles between the two countries. Israel requested favorable entrance conditions to the Slovak market.

DEFENSE CONNECTIONS

14. (SBU) Slovak Minister of Defense Kasicky joined PM Fico in meetings with Israeli companies Elbit Systems and Rafael Armament Development Authority to discuss bilateral trade and third country markets. Kasicky additionally met with firms El-Op and Elisra. Slovakia plans to add a defense attache position to its mission in Tel Aviv.

15. (SBU) The Slovak business delegation included:

- Willing a.s. is the MOD's largest contractor. CEO Ivan Subrt has sat on the board of DMD Holding and four other companies along with the Smer-appointed head of the Slovak Intelligence Service's counterintelligence chief. Kasicky approved a contract with Willing to provide military helmets worth SKK 238 million (USD 9.5 mil) earlier this year. Another executive from the company traveled with Fico to Libya in February (reftel). Willing provided services for Russian Mig-29 planes in the past and is currently one of the companies benefiting from projects to settle Russian debt to Slovakia left over from communist times.

- VRM (Virtual Reality Media) develops land and air simulators for drivers/pilots and related activities in the defense business. Julius Berith is the CEO. VRM would like to export components for simulators, including DOF motion systems, control loading systems, display systems, software, and complete simulators.

- EVPU (Electrotechnical Research and Project Office), headquartered in Dubnica, focuses on research and manufacturing of power electronic systems, nanocrystal glass components, and ball bearings. Igor Gerek is the CEO. EVPU

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would like to export pan-tilt head, converters, servodrives, ballistic computers.

- LOT (Letecke Opravne Trencin - Aircraft Repair Company Trencin) specializes in aircraft upgrades and repair and trades in aircraft parts. Miroslav Jaska, a personal friend of several members of Smer, is the company's Director who accompanied Fico to Israel. In addition to providing repair services, LOT would like to export ground support equipment.

- KON-RAD Trading company specializes in wholesale food and groceries. General Director Pavol Konstiak has excellent contact in Smer, sits on the steering committee of the National Union of Employers of the Trade and Tourism Association, and was a political nominee of the previous SDKU-led government to the Supervisory Board of Slovenske Electrarne. Kontsiak accompanied President Ivan Gasparovic to Vietnam in October 2006. Though he was the only businessman in the delegation to Israel that is not focused on the military industry, the food distribution aspect of KON-RAD has military business potential.

POLITICAL AGREEMENT

16. (C) Politically, Fico assured the GOI of Slovakia's support. Fico endorsed the Quartet principles and noted that any GOS (theoretical) outreach to the Palestinian government would not indicate lack of support for Israel. Fico also assured his Israeli interlocutors that Slovakia is against nuclear weapons in Iran and would vote yes on Iran sanctions at the UNSC (which it has).

17. (U) Fico reached out to the Czechoslovak Jewish community in Israel, visited important holy and memorial sites, and publicly affirmed that Slovakia and the world would not forget about the Holocaust. Given some recent activities by neo-nazis and supporters of Slovakia's WWII-era fascist state in Slovakia, his statements received notable media coverage. Fico's attention to the Slovak-Israelis and his attendance upon his return home at the commemoration of the Jewish

deportations in Poprad (northern Slovakia) were well-received in the Slovak Jewish community.

COMMENT

18. (C) Fico has long-time business friends in Israel in the IT sector. Like many of his recent foreign trips, Fico's Israel visit was focused on expanding business ties, especially for businessmen close to Fico. In fact, no one from the MFA was even included on the trip. Fico believes that Slovakia's decades of experience in producing military equipment can be put to good use by reviving the defense industry and exporting to new allies.

SILVERMAN